

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A computer-implemented method for aiding a consumer in choosing a beverage based upon personal preferences of the consumer, comprising:
  - obtaining spectral information of an inventory of beverages;
  - obtaining spectral information of a sample of a beverage; and
  - comparing the spectral information of the sample with that of the inventory to determine a beverage from the inventory that is similar to the sample,wherein the spectral information for at least one of the inventory and the sample is obtained in a non-destructive manner.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
  - displaying the results of the comparing step to a consumer, wherein the sample corresponds to a beverage preferred by the consumer.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the spectral information includes at least one of visible, infrared, and near infrared spectral information.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the comparing step includes performing statistical analysis on the spectral information for at least one of the inventory and the sample.
5. The method of claim 2, wherein the displaying step includes displaying a list of beverages from the inventory to the consumer that are similar to the beverage preferred by the consumer.
6. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
  - providing the consumer with at least one of sale information and stocking information for a beverage in the displayed results.
7. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

inputting from the consumer search criteria to narrow the displayed results.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the search criteria includes at least one of price information and beverage type.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising categorizing the sample into a category of the inventory.

10. A system for aiding a consumer in choosing a beverage based upon personal preferences of the consumer, comprising:

means for obtaining spectral information of an inventory of beverages;

means for obtaining spectral information of a sample of a beverage; and

means for comparing the spectral information of the sample with that of the inventory to determine a beverage from the inventory that is similar to the sample,

wherein the spectral information for at least one of the inventory and the sample is obtained in a non-destructive manner.

11. The system of claim 10, further comprising:

means for displaying the results of the comparing step to a consumer, wherein the sample corresponds to a beverage preferred by the consumer.

12. The system of claim 10, wherein the spectral information includes at least one of visible, infrared, and near infrared spectral information.

13. The system of claim 10, wherein the means for comparing includes means for performing statistical analysis on the spectral information for at least one of the inventory and the sample.

14. The system of claim 11, wherein the means for displaying includes means for displaying a list of beverages from the inventory to the consumer that are similar to the beverage preferred by the consumer.

15. The system of claim 11, further comprising:  
means for providing the consumer with at least one of sale information and stocking information for a beverage in the displayed results.

16. The system of claim 11, further comprising:  
means for inputting from the consumer search criteria to narrow the displayed results.

17. The system of claim 16, wherein the search criteria includes at least one of price information and beverage type.

18. The system of claim 10, further comprising means for categorizing the sample into a category of the inventory.

19. The system of claim 10, wherein the means for obtaining the spectral information for the inventory, the means for obtaining the spectral information of the sample, and the means for comparing the spectral information comprise devices of a computer system.

20. The system of claim 10, wherein the means for obtaining the spectral information for the inventory, the means for obtaining the spectral information of the sample, and the means for comparing the spectral information comprise computer-readable instructions stored on a computer readable medium.